

Harold Weisberg

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March 9, 1994

Dear Harold:

For the next two weeks I shall be at various libraries.

Yesterday I picked up a new book by Howard Fast, War and Peace. Observations on our Times.(1993) with many small pieces on the 1990s taken from a column he writes for a New York weekly. My he has punch. I also started reading Carl T. Rowan, Dream Makers, Dream Breakers TheWorld of Justice Thurgood Marshall. This one is a surprise to me. I had thought Rowan to be a type of relief pitcher, often good at a column but nothing sustained, but this was a mistake on my part. The book is a fine one, clearly focused on the concept of justice and a meaningful life as its implicate.

On Monday I went to the Menominee reservation again for a meeting of the Museum committee. It is about 70 miles distant. The three Menominee members and David Overstreet, white and an archaeologist and a fine fellow, met from 2 - 4.30 . This time we discussed the archaeology done around the area of the state where the Menominee had historically and presently live. My oh my was that interesting. By piecing together shards of pots and complete pots taken with carbon dating of their fired and charred bottoms, following the patterns, designs, methods, etc., he was able to date the Menominee in clear and certain terms to 700 a.d. right on the reservation at several sites. Is that not remarkable? This will become one of the exhibits in the museum, when and if completed.

We do not know yet what to include and what to exclude, but are rapidly defining priorities and possibilities. There is so much and funding is limited. The tribe will have to train specialists in half dozen fields, build a rather substantial building with climate and security controls and access and etc. They have a limited budget and some internal opposition from those who are impoverished and ignorant of the implication, but overall strong support. [They recently fired a tribal member who taught in the tribal high school that the Menominee were savages and had no history and less culture--college trained.]

Today--it is about 5.00 a.m.--I meet with the local Congressman's representative and two young faculty women to introduce them to him. He hopes to set up coffee, dinner meetings with six or seven young professionals, over the next six months. Obey, the congressman, says much of his district's population shifts from year to year and he is seeing new people from outside who doesn't

know him and he wants to form a link. An hour and one half dinner or supper meeting with him is him at his finest. A good idea. I have set up two people to host them and have another dozen on standby to see if this all works out and he wants to continue with my strain of humans.

After that I meet with a Menominee elder and language teacher to help him draft a letter to his tribe "using all sorts of words" for a job the head of the tribe has said is his but needs paper work to cover the bureaucratic trail. He will go over the last tribal roll--1930s--and explain what the family names mean and how they relate to each family and to Menominee culture. They are some incredible philosophic statements incorporated into a name. He told me last week after reading off one of the names and then reflecting on the time fifty years ago when he had heard its bearer speak in the ancient language of the tribe--in a speech pattern that has a rhythm to it as well as a visual motion of the body as well as the vocabulary that used many ancient words no longer around as well as philosophical concepts and cosmic articulations--that he thought he was hearing then the very voice of heaven, used during the creation of the earth. Sheer beauty! This was once the normal language of the tribe. He himself has not had anyone to speak to for ten years. The six or seven true speakers left are now aged and not accessible to him on a daily basis in their deep forest homes.

Then this evening we shall have a Menominee language class where he will hammer the voice of the gods into our, the visitors, heads.

Before then I must phone the Milwaukee magazine to respond to their entreaties on the problems of the Indians historically. It seems that the tribes are working against the clock in trying to build an infrastructure on the gambling money before the whites take it away. She does not understand why they would think the whites would take it away. I think she cannot count or read or write either. Her historical mind is like Lincoln said once when asked about his experience as a politician the first time he ran. "It is like a dance with an old woman, short and sweet."

Posoh [Menominee for good bye]

David R. Wrone